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DECLARATION AND PLEDGE

AGAINST

S L A V E R Y,

ADOPTED BY THE RELIGIOUS ANTI-SLAVERY

CONVENTION,

HELD AT THE MARLBORO' CHAPEL,

BOSTON, FEBRUARY 26, 1846.

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1846.

THE CALL OF THE CONVENTION.

The undersigned, ministers and church-members in Massachusetts, deeply impressed with the belief that the Gospel properly administered is the great charter of human freedom and equal rights, and deeply grieved with the fact that slavery has increased and greatly strengthened itself for seventy years under the actual ministration of the Gospel in this land, cannot but regard it as a solemn Christian duty to seek out the cause of this discrepancy, and to do what we can for its removal. We do therefore respectfully invite such members, of all denominations in this Commonwealth, as take an interest in this subject, to meet in Convention, for united prayer and fraternal consultation concerning our duty in this matter. The Convention will be held at the Marlboro' Chapel, in the city of Boston, on Thursday, February 26.

OFFICERS OF THE CONVENTION.

Rev. JACOB IDE, D. D. of Medway, *President.*

Rev. NATHANIEL COLVER of Boston, }

Mr. GILBERT HAVEN of Malden, }

Mr. ASAPH RICE of Northboro' }

Mr. LEE CLAFLIN of Hopkinton, }

Mr. M. S. SCUDDER of Boston, }

Rev. L. BOYDEN of Holliston, }

Rev. L. C. MATLACK of Duxbury, }

Vice Presidents.

Secretaries.

DECLARATION AND PLEDGE.



TO ALL THE MINISTERS AND CHURCH-MEMBERS,
BELIEVERS IN CHRIST, THROUGHOUT
THE UNITED STATES :

The Anti-Slavery Convention of Ministers and Church-members in Massachusetts, held at the Marlboro' Chapel, Boston, on the 26th of February, 1846, present the following Declaration of some of their views, and Pledge of their intentions for the future, in regard to the great subject of American Slavery.

The subject has been before us in the light of these interrogatories, viz :—

1. Why the Gospel has not long since abolished American Slavery ?
2. Where lies the blame that it has not ?
3. Are we authorised to expect that the gospel will yet abolish it ?
4. If so, when ? How ? By what agency ?
5. What ought we to do for this end ?
6. How shall the Gospel be so administered, as to secure the abolition of slavery on Christian principles and by Christian influences ?

DECLARATION.

By humble inquiry and prayerful consultation, our minds are led to the following conclusions, on several points connected with this subject, viz :—

I. That we have been a nation about seventy years, and in that time, the number of slaves has risen from seven hundred thousand to three millions, and the slave States from seven to fifteen; and the slave interest has grown so arrogant and powerful, as openly to control the government, and the great religious organizations of the country.

II. That the Gospel is the chief remedy for the moral evils which exist among mankind, such as intemperance, impurity, covetousness, injustice, fraud, oppression, cruelty, war, slavery, &c.; and that when it is FREE, and properly administered, it will surely remove them all, just in proportion as its influence is felt among men.

III. That it does not appear from experience, that the Gospel removes these evils, except as it is applied to them, by the direct efforts of ministers and other Christians, by discountenancing them, and totally abstaining from all participation in them, and faithfully inculcating the opposite virtues.

IV. That in cases, (such, for instance, as was the common use and sale of intoxicating liquors,) where the ministers and churches have largely participated in the guilt of prevailing evils, it becomes their duty not only to withdraw from such participancy, but to bear an open and a clear testimony against such evil; and

thence arises a stronger reason why they should use all possible efforts, and even make greater sacrifices to banish such evils from the community, because their own past connivance has been one of the causes of its continuance and growth.

V. That during the seventy years we have been a nation, the Gospel has been nominally free, and the means of its application have been abundant, in the number of ministers and churches, the facilities of intercourse, the use of the press, &c. ; and yet that the evil of slavery has increased more than fourfold ; and its power of mischief and the difficulties of its removal in a much greater ratio ; and large numbers of ministers and churches in this republic, have freely participated in it ; and that the blame and reproach of all this is shared by every one who has not borne a faithful testimony against it, or who has omitted any thing in his power to prevail on his brethren to do their duty.

VI. That the greatness of the evil is fearfully aggravated by the reproach that has fallen upon the gospel itself—first, that with all its advantages in this country, it has not abolished slavery—and secondly, it is openly claimed that the Gospel is favorable to the system itself.

VII. That the cruel sufferings of three millions of our fellow-countrymen, very many of them our fellow-ministers and church-members, deprived of every one of their rights, forbidden to read the Bible and to keep the commandments of God, and subject to every possible outrage on their consciences and feelings, ought to arouse every American Christian to a sense of his responsibility for the continuance of slavery, and awaken an unalterable determination now to do all that is lawfully in our power to put an end to the whole system, without further allowance or compromise.

VIII. That “we are verily guilty concerning our [enslaved] brother, in that we saw [or ought to have known] the anguish of his soul, when he besought us and we would not hear;”—and for the part that each one of us has had in allowing, or aiding, or consenting to the continuance of slavery, we ought individually to exercise a deep and intelligent repentance before God, and to seek his forgiveness and that of our injured brethren.

IX. That no sight could be more pleasing to God, more honorable to the Christian religion, more cheering to the slave, more hopeful for the universal extension of Christ’s kingdom on earth, than to see the ministers and church-members of this land openly bowing down before the altar of God’s mercy, in humble and hearty confession of the sin of slavery, and earnest and united supplication for God’s forgiveness, and for his gracious help to remove the abomination from the whole country.

X. That our Saviour, when he began his work on earth, declared that he had then begun to accomplish those great social changes, in the deliverance of the oppressed, the instruction of the ignorant, and the relief of the wretched, which had been foretold by the prophet Isaiah, and which every friend of Christ is bound to sympathise with and promote on earth, to the extent of his power and opportunity.

XI. That it is both unbecoming and unwise, for ministers and church-members to fall behind unbelievers or any others, in zeal and liberality for the advancement of any object of benevolence, or the mitigation of any form of misery among men.

XII. That both the word and spirit of Christ require us to make the case of our enslaved brethren our own case, and to bear its reproach, and share its

burdens, and prosecute its objects, in all circumstances, remembering them that are in bonds as bound with them.

XIII. That the cause of Emancipation is the cause of Christ, and therefore every friend of Christ is bound to be engaged in it, as a proof of his love to his Saviour.

XIV. That the abolition of slavery is a great and necessary part of the work of the Gospel in this land, which must be done before the Gospel can exert its full influence here.

XV. That the blame for the continuance of slavery in this land does not rest upon the Gospel, but on the defective manner in which the Gospel has been administered.

XVI. That the people look to their ministers to go before them in every good work, to know what Israel ought to do, and to summon them to labor and self-denial; and we have no doubt any wise and persevering movement by ministers will be sustained by the people, if it is sufficiently thorough and comprehensive to promise success.

XVII. That to doubt whether the Gospel is able to abolish slavery is to disparage the power and wisdom of Christ.

XVIII. That Christian brethren in other countries do look, and have a right to look to the ministers and church-members of the United States, to see to it that the Gospel gains its proper honors in the abolition of slavery.

XIX. That slavery has continued too long, and it is time it was abolished; that the Gospel ought to abolish slavery and must abolish it; that ministers and churches ought to be united and must be united, in this work, as they are in the Bible Society; and that we must and will put forth our best energies until it is done.

P L E D G E .

Holding these general sentiments, we feel now called upon, in the fear of God, and humbly relying on his aid, to pledge ourselves to one another, to our enslaved brethren, to our country, and to God, that we will make active and persevering efforts for the speedy and peaceful abolition of slavery a prominent part of our religious duty; that we will use every means and bear every sacrifice for it which wisdom dictates and religion sanctions; that we will suspend or postpone other cherished objects which may stand in the way of this; that we will act together as brethren, so far as we are agreed on this subject, leaving all that is past to be settled between each individual and his Maker; that we will make the cause of Emancipation our own cause, and labor in it as God may give us ability and opportunity, whoever else may help or hinder, and whatever any others may do or leave undone, for or against it; that we will never consider enough done while more remains which we can do; but will do all that is lawfully in our power, individually and collectively, in every capacity and relation, expecting to do continually more and more, until the fetters are knocked from the limbs of the last slave in our country, and the honor of the Gospel is fully vindicated, as the remedy for slavery, and the charter of civil liberty as well as of eternal life.